

# Cluster Chronicle

*"A community of Episcopal congregations sharing the love and power of the Risen Christ in our communities through worship, evangelization and apostolic service."*



Fr. Charles Wilson

*Greetings to you and to February!*

If January bore the burden of possibilities, promises, plans, etc., then February's stuff either adds or enhances. Or to let another "P" word appear: Procrastination. Let's see what I mean.

For many, the stuff is continuing the resolutions we made for the New Year. Like all conventions, the idea of making resolutions is time-honored. Even if they sometimes get left behind. Does anyone remember the resolutions from our diocesan convention? Or from the city council meetings? Or even Congress itself? So, this month, to get through with what we resolved, would be a pretty good thing to do.

But, outside of the inferiority of our conventional-ism, there is (are) stuff (stuffs) to deal with this month. Lent comes to mind. It'll be here before we know it (Ash Wednesday is the 17th). Lent could be seen as the next hand-hold for those resolutions we made. If we grasp Lent right, they could continue. In other spaces of this newsletter, Ash Wednesday plans and more Lenten stuff will be shared.

What else is on for February? We still deal with COVID. As I write this, there seems to be a trend to end some of the habits we formed this past year. Chicago is allowing indoor dining; California is relaxing its rules. The Center for Disease Control issued a statement urging a return to schools for our students. In my Massachusetts, the same sort of movement is happening. And Ohio, for now, has pushed the curfew back an hour. Time will tell if this snowballs.

For the well prepared, taxes will be worked on, annual things will come due, and there will be a couple of holidays thrown in, too. Some may heart President's Day again.

The other big thing about February is that it is, of course, Black History Month. An email from the local ministerial group notes that there will be a Service/Event for this on February 28. The group leader asked that members participate in the planning, which I intend to do using my own resources and experiences.

I admit seeing this service scheduled for the last day of the month brought a smile to my face. Having last month written about procrastination, the timing seems like another example of that. However, having no idea of the history of the event, previous planning or why February 28 was chosen, tempers any smart aleck remarks.

Still, though, this is an opportunity to go beyond and behind what this month means and can mean for us. There are resources and much to know beyond Rosa Parks of Blessed memory. Or Booker T. Washington, the Tuskegee Airmen, MLK and Roots. There are stories, songs, music and art. There is rich history and wisdom, and reflections on greater society greater than slavery and G.W. Carver's peanuts.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## *Greetings (Con't from page 1)*

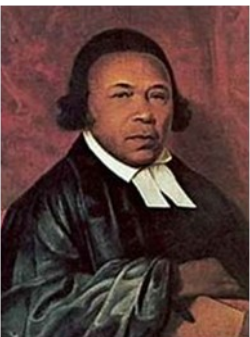
How different would it be if we all did some research and reading and brought some new reasoning about race to that gathering on February 28? Wouldn't it be wonderful to find out for yourself rather than be told the same old, same old stuff? Feed your mind, instead of just using your brain. Where to start? The artwork of Kadir Nelson in children's books and more. Check out *Hamilton* (use the subtitles if you have to, I have friends and family who did). Did you see *Black Panther*? All easy.

Then there is the author Ta-Nehisi Coates and other current black authors. We have a rich history in our own church with the witness of Absalom Jones, first black priest in the Episcopal Church; James Theodore Holly, first black bishop and missionary to Haiti; there is the laywoman and powerful spiritual author, Verna Dozier; Bishop John Walker, first black dean of National Cathedral and Bishop of DC. We have our own Herbert Thompson (who ordained me) and the black church historian and theologian of our own time, Fr. Harold Lewis. Important persons of color that helped shape us all, whether we knew it or not. All Black Lives that mattered.

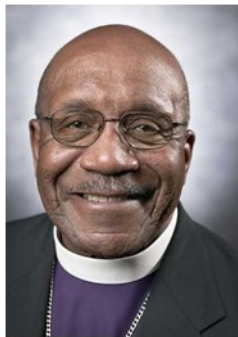
And, if you are with me on this, I discovered a soundtrack for it all. Recently, *Spotify* has put out the catalogued collection of James Baldwin's records. There you can (as I have) listen to Nina Simone, the Supremes, Ray Charles, Gloria Lynne and Aretha Franklin. All good stuff. And, to paraphrase a podcast title, this is all "stuff we should know". Why? Well, 2020 showed us why. And it will give us a deeper understanding of why black lives matter.

I understand if my reasons for lifting up these voices and letting them sing seem obvious. My family make-up. And, okay, I'll give you that. But all this stuff---from that first sentence way back there to now---is too important to seek and look for easy answers. Or reasons. Everything we bring into this month, all our stuff is meant, or should be meant, to make us better. Better to ourselves and to one another. To that neighbor we may not know much about. Happy February, the month of Cupid's love, and G-d's constant challenge to share that love.

Charles +



Rev. Absalom Jones



Rev. Herbert Thompson



Rev. Harold Lewis



Aretha Franklin



Kadir Nelson

## *More planning for Lent*

Cluster Council is considering best practices for the Lenten season. February 17 is Ash Wednesday with Lent beginning February 18. The first Lenten Sunday worship service is February 21. Epiphany will not have its traditional Shrove Tuesday pancake supper for the community. Fr. Charles has several possibilities for Ash Wednesday. In order to provide options for Sunday services, Council suggests returning to in-person worship following the Diocese's original guidelines: no more than ten persons, masked, social distancing and communion with wafers only. For those who prefer online worship, the in-person services would be filmed and offered live via Facebook each Sunday. Watch for announcements concerning these activities.

## *Hot meals on a cold day*

Our Saviour tempted Community Meal diners with homemade pancakes and sausage January 27, the perfect super for a very wintry evening. Once again the boxed meals were available at the church and were delivered to those who called ahead. As always, the faithful crew of church members and volunteers prepared the food and were on hand to help guests with pickup and to make deliveries. On duty were Emily Rozmus, Sarah Bradford, Amy Boeck, Todd Boeck and Dusty Hurst, all masked and observing pandemic protocol.

Limited supplies of vaccine are available nationwide and Champaign County has begun vaccination of priority groups. It is estimated that by early fall, we may expect some degree of normalcy. Won't it be a treat to invite our monthly meal guests to come in and sit down in the dining room and once again make it a time of fellowship as well as food?



## *New Ash Wednesday procedure*

Ash Wednesday, February 17, will be observed differently this year. Ashes will still be offered, but outside only, in your car, or standing on the sidewalk. Methods for “ashing” parishioners will be by use of cotton swab or the sprinkling of ashes over one's head.

Copies of a short liturgy will be available. It uses the model form the *Ashes to Go* movement of which Fr. Charles has been a longtime proponent and practitioner. For that traditionalist itch all Episcopalians have, the full Ash Wednesday liturgy will be recorded live and posted on Facebook February 17 at 7 a.m. for viewing throughout the day. Actual imposition of ashes will be at 9 a.m. at Our Saviour and at 12 noon at Epiphany. Any changes will be shared as soon as possible through Cluster email.

### ***Confession, Wednesday Prayer and discussion***

Also, if anyone would like to make their confession during Lent (all may, none must, some should), contact Fr. Charles to make arrangements. Lenten noonday prayer and discussion group will continue on Wednesdays throughout Lent. Our topic for each week's investigation will be published in the Sunday pew bulletin.

## *A birthday wish*

A bit belated, but no less sincere, is our Happy Birthday to Father Charles' wife, Julie, who reached the half-century mark in January. She was well celebrated and in a reverse of the usual tradition, she sewed a stole and gifted it to Fr. Charles. Designed of white fabric, it was finished with a Greek, equal armed cross of red plaid appliquéd at each end. This style cross traditionally represents balance and peace which we know will be conveyed to Fr. Charles each time he wears this liturgical vestment.

There are several notions about the ancestry of the stole, at one time called an orarium. One considered it a kind of liturgical napkin, linked to the cloth used by Christ when he washed the feet of his disciples, symbolic of Christ's yoke of service.

However, most historians believe that the stole more commonly comes from the scarf worn by officials of the Roman empire. When clergy were accepted into this group, the scarf denoted their rank in that occupation. We are grateful that Fr. Charles continues to guide Cluster worship and prayer and theological discussion and to know that his loving family shares his commitment.



## *The shots heard round the world*

Covid-19 vaccines from two firms, Pfizer and Moderna, are gradually being injected into arms worldwide as distribution systems make every effort to close the gap between storage and syringe. Champaign Health District has begun administering the vaccine in phases according to age, health and essential worker status. Teachers will be vaccinated beginning February 1. Currently being served are residents 65 years and older who have registered with the Health District. There are two ways to register online:

1. Go to the Champaign Health District's website ([champaignhd.com](http://champaignhd.com)) and click on [COVID-19 Vaccination Phase 1B Registration Form](#)([office.com](http://office.com)). Complete form and click Submit.
2. Go to [champaignhd.com](http://champaignhd.com) and print a form (<C:/Users/kcordial/AppData/Local/Temp/mso3732.tmp> ([squarespace.com](http://squarespace.com))). Complete the form and mail to Champaign Health District, 1512 South Route 68, Urbana, OH 43078, or put it in the drop box at the County Community Center in Urbana.

Registrants will be notified by telephone of the time and place of their vaccination appointment. In addition, Champaign Health District has a link to sign up for the Code Red Emergency Notification System which will also notify registrants of their vaccination date. The Health District asks registrants to please not call their office with questions as the staff is fully occupied at this time with vaccination management.



## *Belltower gets more protection*

This photo by Todd Boeck displays Our Saviour's recently applied waterproof seal. It will be topped by a layer of cement board which adds strength, impact and fire resistance.

This material actually absorbs moisture but will not break down or mildew when wet. Cement board can be of two types: cement bonded to wood flakes or reinforced with cellulose fiber.

It's fabricated into sheets of various thickness and can be fastened to a base with screws or a special kind of nail.

Wouldn't the original church builders marvel at the tools and materials now available? And they would surely be pleased to know their beautiful structure is still in use and so lovingly cared for.

## *Days are lengthening*

The tipsy axis of our planet keeps changing our distance to and from the sun. And that determines our four seasons and the amount of heat and light we'll get at any given time and place. According to some online calculations from Dayton, Ohio, on January 29, the sun rose at 7:47 a.m. and set at 5:53. p.m., giving us 10 hours, 6 hours and 7 seconds of daylight.

The next day, January 30, the sun rose at 7:46 a.m. and set at 5:54 p.m.. That gave us 10 hours, 8 minutes and 10 seconds of daylight. Yes, we are gaining about 2 minutes and 3 seconds every day! And that will grow until the Vernal Equinox March 21 brings us to equal hours of daylight and dark.

## **Black History Month**

### *February, short and sweet*

The shortest month is packed with special days, the whole month dedicated to the achievements and contributions of people of color.

But, first, chronologically, comes the presentation of the Infant Jesus at the temple on February 2. Also on that date in 1865, President Lincoln signed the thirteenth amendment making slavery or involuntary servitude unlawful in the United States.

Sharing February 2 with that memorable event, the humble woodchuck (groundhog), became the forecaster of winter weather.

If Woody Woodchuck casts a shadow by emerging from his den on a sunny February 2, six more weeks more of winter can be expected. Since the Spring Equinox occurs March 21, Woody's predictions are usually pretty accurate.

Quite a few of February's special days acknowledge life's sweetness---from Valentines for sweethearts to treats for a sweet tooth. The traditional Valentine's Day, February 14, is named for third century Roman clergyman, Valentine, martyred for refusing to denounce Christianity.

The Anglican Church commemorates St. Valentine's unswerving devotion on February 14.

Early writings claim that a Roman judge had

once tested Valentine's Christianity by asking him to restore his (the judge's) daughter's sight and hearing.

Valentine did this, and on the eve of his execution, he sent a note to that young lady signed, Your Valentine. Perhaps this gesture began the tradition of sending cards of affection on Valentine's Day.

And, perhaps the designation of February 29 as Leap Year when a lady is permitted to propose marriage to a hesitant gentleman.

February 15 has been designated Presidents Day, a shared celebration of the birthdays of President Lincoln, February 12, and President Washington, February 22. Several other days involve sweets:

February 12---Plum Pudding Day

February 21---Sticky Bun Day

February 22---Cook a Sweet Potato Day.

And someone, somewhere added these reminders:

February 4---Thank a Mailman(woman) Day

February 7---Send a Card to a Friend Day

February 11--Don't Cry Over Spilled Milk Day

February 16--Do a Grouch a Favor Day

February 17--Random Act of Kindness Day

February 20--Love your Pet Day.

### *There's no place like (your) home*

Nowadays we're likely to hear someone grumble that they're "stuck at home." But, if you've got to be stuck somewhere, home is a pretty good place. Home is a haven of safety in natural and man-made storms; a place of rest and refreshment, a place where you can, without apology, be you.

We look at home every day, but don't really see it. Might we use "stuck-at-home" period to fully see and appreciate home? What makes it yours---what time has rendered part of you: the chair you've made so comfortable by years of use; framed photos of beloved faces from whose features yours were borrowed; paintings whose painters we know; artifacts and silly collectibles made just for pleasure; used hardback and paperback books whose characters invite us in again and again; a bible inscribed to you on your 12<sup>th</sup> birthday from Grandma and Grandpa H.; remnants of the original set of fruit-patterned dishes you chose to "start housekeeping," a kitchen whose ceiling bears the signature of a long ago leak. As unique as its occupants, every home is filled with signs and sounds of life, flaws you fixed or learned to live with, hand-me-down furnishings, soothing hums and companionable creaks, the counterpoint of a ticking clock---and the dignity of the old school-house clock that retired at three one afternoon, a century ago---vistas you can count on outside each window, all welcoming you home.

## Every four years

The recent inauguration ceremonies at the U. S. Capitol included a presidential address. That was begun by first president, 56-year-old George Washington. Since then, each president has been invited to “speak his piece” after he takes the oath of office. Five presidents have declined and 13 others, who were vice presidents and became chief executive at the death of a president, had no inauguration ceremonies unless they were elected a second time in their own right.

It is recorded that after Washington took the oath he said, “*so help me God,*” and kissed the Bible. From that time, the phrase was part of the oath. Thomas Jefferson had said before the service that if the oath were not taken on the Bible, it would not be legitimate. That began a frenzied search for a bible. None were found in Federal Hall and Washington took the oath on a bible borrowed from a Masonic Lodge.



*George Washington at age 57, from a forensic reconstruction*

The inaugural address is the opening salvo of a four-year mission. Washington’s 1800-word address (about two minute’s worth) is couched in the formal, courteous, eloquence of an 18<sup>th</sup> century English gentleman. A gentleman who had, as a colonial soldier, cheated death in fierce battles on the frontier, and as an American, led an amateur army against staggering odds in defense of a principle of government that existed only in theory. A generous part of his address insisted that he was not qualified for the job:



*Washington taking the Oath of Office by Urbana sculptor J.Q.A. Ward*

*“On being summoned by my Country...could not but overwhelm with despondence one, inheriting inferior endowments from nature and unpracticed in the duties of civil administration and peculiarly conscious of his deficiencies.”*

Also prominent in the address were: *“Supplications to the Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Councils of Nations and whose providential aids can supply every human defect. That his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States.”*

In contrast, a wiser Washington’s second inaugural is a brief, (135 words), taunt submission of the work of his first term of office for public criticism: *“That if it shall be found, during my administration of the Government, I have in any instance violated willingly or knowingly the injunctions thereof, I may (besides incurring constitutional punishment) be subject to the upbraidings of all who are now witnesses of the present solemn ceremony.”*

The tradition of the president-elect and his family attending church before the inauguration was begun by Franklin Roosevelt. The inclusion of prayer in the ceremony is credit to Dwight Eisenhower who at the conclusion of the prepared address asked to “be allowed the privilege of a little private prayer of my own.” We close with a comment from a man who has read all of the inaugural addresses. He said, *“There’s not a single funny line in the official texts.* It might not be a moment that induces humor.

We close with a comment from a man who has read all of the inaugural addresses. He said, “There’s not a single funny line in the official texts.” It is, perhaps, not a position that induces humor.

## Help creates hope

In a recent online article, Rev. Jermonde Taylor, rector of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, praised his historically black congregation for the way it is dealing with Covid and its seemingly endless consequences. He said members have responded with fortitude, channeling feelings into acts of kindness. Aligning themselves in the theology of hope, congregants have become door to door evangelists, offering encouragement of all kinds, from food to prayer.

St. Ambrose is among many entities focused on generating hope. Professionals in medical and behavioral sciences agree that hope, expectation, some vision of the future, can make all the difference in physical and emotional health. Especially now. Hospital staffs have become “cheerleaders.” Uncomfortably hot in their plastic protective gear, they still spend as much time as possible with each patient. “If we’re not going to let families in,” one nurse said, “then it comes to us.” There’s a lot that’s on hold right now; a lot we can’t do. But we can choose between bemoaning and believing. A phone call, an email, a card or letter can create hope, expectation, a view of the future.

## Older adults are coping

This may be news to somebody, but we’ve known it for generations. Louise Hawkley, researcher for the National Social Life, Health and Aging of the University of Chicago, surveyed adults 55 to 99 years old. She tracked the physical and emotional well-being of these people and found “they are more vulnerable physically but show resilience and perseverance in spite of loneliness and isolation during the Pandemic”. Her survey crosses generations. They are persevering and Louise believes their stamina isn’t fully appreciated. “They’ve been through things and know how to handle stress,” she says, “we can learn from them.” Yes!

## Presidents and poetry

Two hundred years after our first president took the oath of office, poetry became part of the inaugural ceremony. In 1961, John F. Kennedy asked poet Robert Frost to read *The Gift Outright*, a Kennedy favorite. Frost agreed, but also included a new poem, *Dedication*, he’d written for the occasion. On a cold, windy, snowy Inauguration Day 86-year-old Frost stood at the podium, the wind blowing his typewritten text, blowing his hair into his eyes, and the glare of sun on snow making it impossible for him to read. Without hesitation, he began to recite *The Gift Outright*, Kennedy’s original request.

Amanda Gorman, President Biden’s choice, is the first national youth poet laureate to participate. Her poem is very long, but concludes thusly:

*With every breath from my bronze-pounded chest we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one; we will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the West. We will rise from the windswept Northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution. We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states. We will rise from the sunbaked South. We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover in every known nook of our nation, in every corner called our country, our people, diverse and beautiful, will emerge battered and beautiful. When day comes, we step out of the shade of flame and unafraid. The new dawn blooms as we free it, for there is always light if only we are brave enough to see it, if only we are brave enough to be it.*

## Prayers for the Adair family

We are grieved by the death of Elizabeth Ann (Beth) Adair, 53, on January 4. She is a beloved daughter of Scott Adair of Epiphany, sister of Paul and Emily and spouse of Heather Barnard. A graduate of Urbana High School, Beth was proud of her hometown and Champaign County. She was an active member of the Historical Society and Monument Square District.

## Taylor assailant indicted

Nine years ago, Louis B. Taylor, former member of Epiphany, died from injuries inflicted when attackers entered his home. One assailant was indicted last month and will be tried for the crime. May justice be done and done swiftly, that Louis’ son Jeff and his family may find peace.



## *Ranking inaugural addresses*

### THE LONGEST

William Henry Harrison, whose 1840 presidential campaign was welcomed in Champaign County with parades, picnics and speeches in Monument Square, gave the longest inaugural address in history---8,443 words took nearly two hours to deliver. Harrison braved the cold, wind and snow without overcoat or hat. Within a month, he contracted pneumonia and died and Vice President John Tyler became president.

### MOST MEMORABLE.

George Washington, 1789, his first inaugural address leads this category.

Thomas Jefferson, 1801: Seeking unity after a spite-filled campaign with president John Adams, Jefferson said, "We are all Federalists, we are all Republicans."

Abraham Lincoln, 1865: "With malice toward none and charity for all."

Franklin Roosevelt, 1933: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

John F. Kennedy, 1961: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

### MOST SURPRISING MOMENT

In 1953 as President Eisenhower stood in the parade reviewing stand, a cowboy rode up and lassoed him.

### WARMEST AND COLDEST

Ronald Regan's inaugurals top both categories. In 1981 the January 20 temperature was 55 degrees. In 1985, the temperature on January 20 was a bitter 7 degrees. Events were moved inside, Congress passing a last-minute resolution to permit the use of the Rotunda for the ceremonies.

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